

Beautify Your Home with a Trip to Belle Maison

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Translated from French, “Belle Maison” means “beautiful home”, a fitting name for the charming new gift shop on Erie Avenue. Indeed, Belle Maison provides just about everything you need for magnificent home décor, inside and out.

Annie Glossinger, the store’s owner, was born and raised in Cincinnati and now lives in Indian Hill with her husband and four children. Ms. Glossinger has previously owned two other local shops, but with Belle Maison she is fulfilling her desire to create a business from the ground up. “I really wanted to start a shop from scratch—from the very beginning,” she explains.

Belle Maison, which made its debut on April 25th, is housed in the building previously occupied by restaurant Taco Casa, although you’d never recognize it. The space has been completely redesigned and renovated. “It was a lot of work—it had to be completely gutted,” Ms. Glossinger notes.

The hard work has paid off. Belle Maison is a beautiful, picturesque shop that caters to all of the senses. With its ornately tiled floors and elegant use of color, the refined décor provides such a sense of serenity that you almost forget you’re in a store—until you see the merchandise.

And what merchandise! Belle Maison offers an extraordinary array of carefully chosen products. “We offer gifts for the home, the garden, baby, bridal—there’s a very wide variety,” notes Ms. Glossinger. Robert Lee, Belle Maison’s designer, displays everything creatively and artfully.

The main section of the store is filled with such items as unique serving ware, gourmet foods, embroidered pillows, soothing bath and body products, ornate clocks, handcrafted birdhouses, artistic greeting cards—the list goes on and on. And for the convenience of brides-to-be, Belle Maison offers shower and wedding registries.

“With such a variety, we have a price point for everyone,” points out store manager Marjorie Reynolds. Among some of the top-selling items are a

collection of exquisite drawstring purses hand-stitched by employee Muff Carothers, colorful summer jewelry, and fragrant candles. New inventory arrives almost daily. Ms. Glossinger and Mr. Lee personally hand-select all of the merchandise with an eye to the unique.

Housed in an adjacent room is the floral design area, where you can find fresh flowers and silk arrangements. Customers can come in and hand-pick their blossoms, or call ahead to place special orders for weddings and other occasions. Mr. Lee, the shop's floral designer, creates an array of innovative arrangements. For one client, he filled miniature baby carriages with fresh flowers to use as unique centerpieces for a baby shower.

On Thursday nights, Belle Maison offers floral workshops, during which a variety of designers demonstrate to students how to create their own arrangements. Among the planned activities are an all-day orchid show, dried wreath making, and creating container gardens. Class size is limited to 10 people; you can register and pick up schedules at the shop. The workshop space is also available to reserve for special events, such as bridal showers or girls' nights out.

Finding the ideal building played a part in the selection of Belle Maison's locale, but Ms. Glossinger credits the surrounding Hyde Park area as a contributor to the shop's success. "I love the activity," she says. "There's such a cohesive neighborhood feel. People have stopped in to welcome us to the community and to thank us for helping to restore the block." Ms. Glossinger notes that the location lends to the store a great deal of exposure and easy accessibility.

Open seven days a week, Belle Maison caters to a wide variety of clientele. "We're lucky in that we attract a large range—from high-school students to neighborhood parents to older folks." Although the shop is still fairly new, it's already attracting a number of repeat customers.

It's easy to see what keeps them coming back. In addition to its exquisite merchandise, Belle Maison offers complementary gift-wrap and exceptional service from a friendly, efficient staff. "We're all like family," Ms.

Glossinger says. "I practically grew up with half the people who work here." There is a resulting sense of kinship among the employees.

Whether you're looking for the perfect housewarming gift or a unique wedding present, you'll find it at Belle Maison. And chances are, you'll leave with a little something extra for yourself.

Belle Maison is located at 3250 Erie Avenue in East Hyde Park. Hours are Monday through Wednesday 10 am.-6 p.m., Thursday and Friday 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. Call 871-1109 for more information.

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